

## Theme: The Greatest Commandment – The Greater Gospel

### Matthew 22:34-46

**34** But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. **35** Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, **36** "Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?" **37** Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' **38** "This is *the* first and great commandment. **39** "And *the* second *is* like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' **40** "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." **41** While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, **42** saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "*The Son of David.*" **43** He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: **44** 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" ' ? **45** "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" **46** And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Have you always gotten along with your siblings? Have you always honored, respected, and obeyed your parents? Ever gossiped about a coworker or classmate? You ever “hated someone’s guts?” Can you remember times in your life when you could have helped someone else who was in need but just didn’t take the time to do it? How about your relationship with God? Have you always made God your dearest treasure in life and loved Him above everyone and everything else? Have you always honored, respected, and obeyed God above everyone and everything else? Have you always fully trusted God and turned to Him first for help in every situation, no matter how frightening, no matter how difficult, or how hopeless things looked?

When you considered these questions what did it make you realize? How did they make you feel? Did you think of how imperfectly—how *badly*—you’ve treated your fellow man and how poorly you’ve loved and served your God and Savior? Me too. Did it make you feel kinda guilty? Me too. Well, I’ve got some bad news: We are guilty—guilty of breaking both parts of **The Greatest Commandment** that Jesus speaks about in our text for this morning. We have *NOT* always loved the LORD with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (**v. 37**). (In fact, we might ask if any of us ever have!) We have *NOT* always loved our neighbors as ourselves. That is bad news for us since Jesus told the Pharisees who were questioning Him that the entire Old Testament (“**the Law and the Prophets**” – **v. 40**, which were the only written Scriptures in Jesus’ day) hangs on these two commandments! Despite that fact, we still constantly break these greatest commands from the LORD. The Bible tells us “**The soul who sins shall die**” (**Ezekiel 18:4**). That is bad news! How sad & how tragic for all of us! Thank the LORD our text doesn’t end there at **v. 40!** Thank God His revealed Word doesn’t end there!

Now, in our text we read that the Pharisees had come to Jesus to once again “**test**” Him with a question about the Law (**v. 35**). This makes sense since the Law is what the Pharisees were interested in. They were experts in the Law. In fact their rabbis (or, ‘teachers’) counted no less than 613 commandments; 248 of them were positive (“Do’s”) and 365 negative (“Don’ts”)! How would you like to take their confirmation class?!?! Unfortunately, the Law was also where they looked for their righteousness. Many of them thought they had kept God’s Law because they *outwardly* had obeyed it. This, of course, really didn’t make them righteous before God, but it did make them very “self-righteous”! It was that sinful attitude that Jesus spoke so harshly against many times in His confrontations with the Pharisees.

It was also one of the reasons Jesus went on to ask them some questions. He wanted to turn them from relying on themselves and looking to the Law for their righteousness and instead turn them to look to Jesus, the Christ. We read in our text, **While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" (v. 41-42)**. This was an easy question for the Pharisees to answer: **They said to Him, "The Son of David."** In the Old Testament it

was clear that the Messiah, the Christ, would be the Son of David; that is from the line of King David. Jesus then goes on to ask them a pair of questions that they simply could not answer, **He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool" ' ? "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. (v. 43-46).** The reason the Pharisees could not answer Jesus was because they really didn't have the correct understanding of who and what the Christ would be. They believed the Christ who was promised by God in the Old Testament would be an earthly ruler, a military Messiah. They saw no need for Him to come as a spiritual Savior or the ultimate sacrifice for sin. After all, they really didn't think they had any to forgive!

But Jesus with His words here shows them that His true glory as the Messiah was the fact as true God He was King David's Lord, but in His grace and mercy He humbled Himself and also became David's Son. He came as one of us—a man of flesh and blood just like you and me—in order to put Himself under God's holy Law including His **Greatest Commandment**. The difference was Jesus kept God's **Greatest Commandment**—and all of His commandments perfectly! He *always* “**loved the LORD [His] God with all [His] heart, with all [His] soul, and with all [His] mind.**” He *always* “**loved [His] neighbor as [Himself].**” We probably can't even imagine doing that perfectly for an hour, much less our whole lifetime from conception to the casket! And yet, the astounding thing is that God counts that perfection of Jesus as our perfection—yes, even in regard to God's **Greatest Commandment!** That is why Jesus became the Son of David.

It is through faith in Jesus, the Son of David, that the Holy Spirit gives us the desire and the strength to love God and love our neighbor. Not to *earn* God's love by doing it—we already have that—and not because we can do it perfectly—Jesus already did that—but rather to show our love to God in return. Listen to these words from **1 John 4:9-11**, “**This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**”

It is also in Jesus, the Son of David, that we find forgiveness for all those times when we have failed to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. And it is in the Son of David that we find forgiveness for all those times we have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves. God looks at us, the guilty, and because of Christ declares us “Not guilty!” That's why Jesus died! Peter writes, “**For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God**” (1 Peter 3:18).

So, let's apply this text to ourselves. Are you looking to God's Law for your righteousness? Are you feeling guilty about the fact that you cannot keep God's Law, or even His **Greatest Commandment** no matter how hard you try? Don't look to God's Law for your righteousness or your comfort. God's Law and His **Greatest Commandment** show us our sins and show us our great need for a Savior. Look instead to Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man. He is that Savior! He kept God's **Greatest Commandment** for us and took away our sins. That's the Good News! Rejoice in the fact that although God has given us **The Greatest Commandment** He has also given us **The Greater Gospel!** Listen closely and take to heart the words of the hymn we are about to sing:

*My soul, no more attempt to draw  
Thy life and comfort from the Law.  
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;  
The man that trusts the promise lives! Amen.*  
(Hymn 289 v. 4 TLH)